

Search now underway for best arena sites

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Staff will also begin work on a 2011-2020 capital budget and forecast with the assumption of a phased construction of a twin pad arena in Georgetown and the twinning of the existing arena in Acton. Total cost is estimated at \$32.9 million, including the possible acquisition of land next to the Gellert Centre. The 2011 budget process begins next month on August 23. More financial details will be released at that time.

Memorial Arena's days are numbered, Mayor Rick Bonnette, the task force's vice-chair, reminded his colleagues.

"We're going to have an arena, or two arenas, in place by that time," he said, noting that in this term of council, two fire stations have been built, construction is underway on the Acton library with the Georgetown library soon to follow. "The arenas will be the top priorities for the next term of

council, in my mind."

Even though the need for arenas in Georgetown was the impetus for the task force's creation, the situation is also dire in Acton.

Lewis noted that many Acton youngsters who play hockey never play or practise in their home community. The Acton arenas users stated they would be unwilling to contribute to the \$25 hourly surcharge beginning in the 2011-12 season unless there was a Town commitment for the twinning of the Acton arena in 2014-15.



BRYAN LEWIS

"This would be a fantastic wish-list if could all happen with the timeframe (2016)... and the ball is rolling on this," said Lewis. "But in fairness, the new council would have to make the decision on whether they would or would not be built."

But at least all the research will be done and ready for them, he said.



My pal Clifford

Ryann Doherty, 4, of Acton, enjoyed a big red furry hug from an even bigger Clifford the Dog, as the famous character of the children's book series, as well as the PBS children's series, dropped by Halton Hills Library in Acton last Thursday and later at the Georgetown Branch.

Photo by Ted Brown

Regional tax hike likely

By **KIM ARNOTT**
Special to the IFP

Regional taxes could rise by as much as 3.1 per cent next year, according to estimates from Halton staff.

Inflation, provincial cost-cutting, a rise in contributions to the employee pension plan and the increased cost of providing services in a growing region will continue to put upward pressure on tax rates, according to staff.

With about one-quarter of the Region's revenue coming directly from provincial grants and cost-sharing programs, Halton CAO Pat Moyle expressed nervousness about the future impact of the large provincial deficit on the municipality's income.

"It's no secret that the provincial government has a significant financial challenge," he told a meeting of Halton's Budget Review committee last week. "I don't think we can expect to see any growth—in fact, I think we'll see some cutbacks over the next five to eight years."

Changes to the way the Province is funding land ambulance services is already expected to cost the Region an additional \$1 million next year, with the possibility that the Province will make those changes retroactive to 2008 and send Halton a bill to recover money the Region was paid under the old rules.

That news had Halton Hills Councillor Clark Somerville fuming over the basic unfairness of changing the rules retroactively, and suggesting municipalities should make a joint protest through the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO).

"This is the start of subtle downloading as (the Province) starts balancing its budget," he said.

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